



There were ring-necked snakes and rattlesnakes, water hoses and splatter paints. There were children “grazing” like cattle, running through city storm water systems and migrating south for the winter. There was laughter and learning, and in the middle of it all, silent pauses to soak in the pristine beauty of nature right around them. This wild mixture of learning, fun, and nature was just another day at the Twin Lakes Water Festival.

The 5th Annual Twin Lakes Water Festival was held on September 17 at the Council Grove Lake in Morris County. This children’s water festival was host for the day to more than 1,100 students from 4th and 5th grades from area schools. Participants spent the day rotating through structured activity stations with the beauty of the lake surrounding them. Students and teachers participated in an array of hands-on educational activities, and had the opportunity to take home a one of a kind natural resource experience.

Students actually became water molecules and traveled through the water cycle. Next they transformed into crime scene investigators, and had to look at all of the forensic evidence and interview witnesses to determine the cause of

death to an animal. Some participants learned that cities contribute an alarming amount of pollution to waterways through runoff; simulated by students running through a storm water system maze, collecting pollutants before they reached the river. All kinds of animals native to Kansas were at the festival, to teach the students first-hand how dependent animals and all living creatures are on clean, abundant water sources. Students even got down and dirty when they transformed a table full of mud into a functioning watershed complete with roads, ditches, towns, farms, and rivers.

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Core curricular standards

Natural resource professionals from across the state led 25-minute activities for students in their homeroom classes. Nearly 200 festival staff members volunteered for the day, and over 50 of these volunteers were high school students from local Key and Science Clubs. Activities, while focused on natural resources and environmental education, were largely tied to the Kansas Core Curricular Standards, allowing teachers to meet their standards and benchmarks by attending the festival.



Geary County students from the Apostolic Academy investigate a dead raccoon to determine the cause of death at the CSI Wild station at the Twin Lakes Water Festival.

Some pre-festival enthusiasm was created by classes participating in the annual festival banner decorating contest. Each class was supplied with a blank piece of canvas, and the classes decorated their canvas with a natural resource theme. A pizza party was held back at school for


the five winning schools that were announced at the festival. The 2009 winning classes came from Franklin Elementary and Spring Valley Elementary of Geary County, Herington Elementary of Dickinson County, Admire Elementary of Lyon County, and Logan Avenue Elementary of Lyon County.

The Twin Lakes Water Festival was proud to teach students and adults from Morris, Chase, Geary, Wabaunsee, Lyon, and Dickinson counties about water quality and local resource issues. Through the financial backing of a WRAPS (Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy) grant in the Neosho Headwaters, locally known as the “Twin Lakes,” the festival has been able to remain cost-free to participating schools for all five years of the event.


Katie Miller joined the KRWA staff in October 2009. She previously worked for Flint Hills Resource Conservation and Development as a Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy Project Coordinator since 2003. She organized and coordinated the Twin Lakes Water Festival in 2005 – 2009; it has been attended by more than 6,000 participants.




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